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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum

CASTRO'S PLANS FOR SUBVERSION
IN LATIN AMERICA

15 October 1963

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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OCI No. 2365/63

15 October 1963

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
MEMORANDUM:

SUMMARY

Fidel Castro feels, with increased urgency, the need for some dramatic new victory to restore the momentum of his revolution. There are indications [redacted]

[redacted] that what he has in mind is the initiation in the near future of revolutionary action elsewhere in Latin America, specifically in Panama, Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru.

Castro's subversive assets in Latin America vary greatly from country to country. Only in Venezuela, which apparently remains his key target, does he seem to have the capability to call on significant elements within an active revolutionary movement to step up terrorist activity when he so chooses. In most other countries, he has little influence over revolutionary groups or parties. Nevertheless, the alumni of Cuban training schools are a growing band in many Latin American countries, and a significant proportion of these people can probably be considered under Cuban control.

Cuban leaders have publicly recognized that many revolutionaries would be lost in the initial stages of the lengthy "antiimperialist struggle," but they apparently believe that the initiation of the struggle itself is necessary to create the conditions in which ultimate victory will become possible.

The immediate Cuban goal appears to be to organize and commit to action such cadres of revolutionaries as may be amenable to Cuban control and to seek, through these and any other Cuban assets, to cause the disruption and disorganization of established institutions in other Latin American countries.

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CASTRO'S PLANS FOR SUBVERSION
IN LATIN AMERICA

1. There are a number of indications that Fidel Castro feels--with increased urgency--the need for some dramatic new victory to restore the momentum of his revolution, to enhance the regime's security, and perhaps ultimately to lessen his dependence on the Soviet Union. There are indications in Castro's own speeches since 26 July, in the public pronouncements of Cuban leaders close to him, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that what he has in mind is the initiation in the near future of revolutionary action elsewhere in Latin America.

Castro's Need for a Victory

3. From Castro's viewpoint, events since shortly after his return from the USSR last June have been generally unfavorable, both at home and abroad. On the domestic scene, the prospects are increasingly dim for significant economic progress at least over the next few years, living conditions remain drab, and there seems to be a growing feeling of ennui among the population. In short, the steam seems to be going out of Castro's revolution. The additional economic disruptions likely to follow the 4 October agrarian "reforms" will contribute further to the domestic political and economic pressures now weighing on Castro. The severe damage caused by Hurricane Flora will further depress public morale and intensify these pressures.

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4. At the same time, US pressures are growing, and the exile raids which have been occurring with increased frequency since mid-August have given a fillip to the morale of Castro's domestic opponents while adding to his own growing frustrations. Meanwhile, he has been observing with evident concern Soviet moves to improve relations with the United States.

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Castro's Rationale

5. Whatever the effect of Soviet or Communist Chinese ideology on his thinking, Castro has always felt impelled to maintain the dynamic forward movement of his revolution. He has frequently boasted that with each new US action against his regime, he has responded aggressively with a countermove that has served to carry his revolution farther forward. In his view, this policy has served him well. The short-lived period last spring when--almost certainly at Soviet behest--he made half-hearted gestures toward "peaceful coexistence" with the United States ended in what he probably regards as a rude US rebuff that demonstrated the unworkability--at least for him--of the Soviet thesis. By mid-July, Castro was evidently beginning to sense the need for some new victory for his revolution, preferably one that would also serve as a blow against the US. As the summer wore on Cuba's economic problems multiplied, and exile raids increased in frequency. His frustrations mounted and his need for some dramatic success grew.

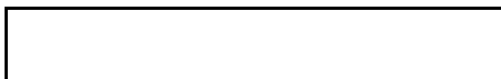
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7. Castro's renewal of public revolutionary appeals to Latin America began with his speech of 26 July. In this speech he recaptured much of the militant tone of his speeches of last fall and early winter, making clear that he regards Cuba as the main source of inspiration and guidance for what he calls the inevitable revolution in Latin America. He again denied that Cuba provides money or arms to Latin American revolutionaries, but declared that Cubans "are experts on ideas" and share them with revolutionaries all over the world. He said that what has happened in Cuba can take place "exactly the same in many Latin American countries." He declared that "fighting revolutionaries" in Latin America must take advantage of the conditions that presently favor revolution and "open the breach." The Cuban propaganda drive initiated by the speech, however, has as yet not reached the level of intensity and militancy of the campaign of a year ago.

8. The next major Cuban public pronouncement on the Latin American revolution was contained in the lead article in the September issue of Cuba Socialista, the regime's official ideological journal. In this article, Che Guevara again argued that guerrilla warfare is the basic instrument for the achievement of revolutionary power in Latin America. The "anti-imperialist struggle," he predicted, will be continent-wide and much blood will be spilled during a long period, but the Andes Mountains are destined to become, in Castro's words, "the Sierra Maestra of America." The Guevara article received prompt and extensive play in Peiping's propaganda media.



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9. Castro's most recent public statements on the subject, contained in a speech of 28 September, again reflected his urgent need for early revolution in Latin America. Commenting on the military coup in the Dominican Republic, he stated that this had demonstrated once again the truth of the Cuban contention that for any genuine revolution to succeed in Latin America, the military class must first be destroyed and "their principal leaders executed." He referred to the US-Cuban relationship as a "battle between the past and the future...a battle against time," because while the "imperialists" believe they can destroy the Cuban revolution, the Cuban revolutionaries believe that before that can happen, "many other revolutions like ours will appear on the continent."

10. What emerges from these and other Cuban pronouncements is the apparent conviction of Castro and his aides that the "anti-imperialist revolution" is inevitable in Latin America, that Cuban influence and assistance can speed up the process, and that it is urgent from the Cuban point of view that wherever possible revolutionary action be initiated in the immediate future.

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Cuban Subversive Assets in Latin America

12. Castro's subversive assets in Latin America vary greatly from country to country in organization, strength, and effectiveness. Only in Venezuela, which apparently remains his key target, does he seem to have the capability to call on significant elements within an active revolutionary movement to

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step up terrorist activity when he so chooses. In other countries, however, there are organized groups --many of whose members have received months of training in Cuba--who could spark serious disorders, or make initial gains.

13. There are serious divisions among extreme leftists and Communist groups in many Latin American countries. The Cubans have exerted considerable effort, with apparently only minor successes, in their attempts to bring about the unity of the leftist extremists in "national liberation fronts" under their control or strong influence. Their failure to accomplish this in such strategic countries as Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, and others is a serious weakness in the Cuban subversive capabilities. Nevertheless, the alumni of Cuban training schools are a growing band in many Latin American countries, and a significant proportion of these people can probably be considered under Cuban control.

The Cuban Case for Immediate Action

14. In view of the fact that Castro's subversive assets in the Latin American countries other than Venezuela appear at this time to lack the organization, strength, and wherewithal to launch successful revolutionary action independently, it would seem that Castro's insistence that they be committed to action in the near future risks the loss of many of these assets. This appears to be recognized by the Cuban leaders. It has already occurred, for instance, in Nicaragua where the small Cuban-supported guerrilla bands that crossed the Honduran border last summer have suffered serious losses at the hands of the Nicaraguan armed forces.

15. Che Guevara has explained that many "good revolutionaries" will be lost in the initial stages of the struggle. But that, in his view, is not important. What is important is that a struggle--which he admits will be lengthy--be initiated soon. In his Cuba Socialista article, he explained that "it is not always necessary to wait for all the conditions for revolution to exist; the insurrectionary focal point can create the necessary conditions." Here Guevara seems to be saying that even if conditions in a particular country are not ripe for revolution, these conditions can be created by a determined revolutionary leadership.

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16. In the same connection, Guevara explained that one of the revolutionaries' jobs is to force the "bourgeois governments" to "unmask themselves" and reveal "their true natures as brutal dictatorships led by reactionaries." Once the governments are forced to resort to violence and suppression, "the struggle will deepen so there can be no turning back," Guevara declared. This Cuban conviction that democratic governments are a greater menace to Cuban goals than outright dictatorships explains in part the jubilation with which the Cuban UN delegation greeted the news of the recent coup in the Dominican Republic.

17. The immediate Cuban goal, therefore, would appear to be two-fold: (1) to organize and commit to action such cadres of revolutionaries as may be amenable to Cuban influence or control; and (2) to seek, through these and any other assets, to cause the disruption and disorganization of established institutions in the other Latin American countries. It appears unlikely, therefore, that Cuban subversive planning in Latin America is being implemented according to any "timetable," in the sense of a list of priority targets or actions. Rather, the targets will continue to be targets of opportunity.

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